



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

Directorate Media Policy

Unit Audiovisual and Media Services Policy

CALL FOR PROPOSALS *CONNECT-2020-5558924*

Pilot Projects / Preparatory Action

Media freedom and investigative journalism

This call for proposals consists of three actions:

Action 1 - Pilot Project: A Europe-wide response mechanism for violations of press and media freedom

Action 2 - Preparatory Action: Cross-border investigative journalism fund

Action 3 - Pilot Project: Supporting investigative journalism and media freedom in the EU

The actions will be carried out under separate grant agreements:

Action 1 - one Multiple beneficiaries grant agreement;

Action 2 - one Multiple beneficiaries grant agreement;

Action 3 - one Multiple beneficiaries grant agreement.

Applicants are requested to select and identify clearly the Action(s) for which they are submitting a proposal(s). A separate proposal must be submitted for each selected action.

1 INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

Media freedom and pluralism are essential pillars of any democracy and crucial conditions for an open and free democratic debate. They are enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 11(2)).

Physical attacks on, online incitement and abusive lawsuits against, death threats to and, even, assassinations of investigative journalists in the EU have brought to the fore the dangers which investigative journalists often face and, consequently, the need to enhance their protection.

Journalists increasingly investigate issues of common interest to citizens of several Member States. However, such cross-border investigations tend to be complex and resource-intensive and often lack adequate funding.

While digital transformation has led to new working methods in the media sector and the emergence of a collaborative journalism community in Europe, it has also had a disruptive effect on all types of media, including news media. There is a clear need to promote quality journalism, to help journalists acquire the relevant skills and technological know-how and to support media freedom and media diversity in the European Union.

This Call combines three references in the European Parliament's budgetary remarks for 2020:

- Action 1 - Pilot Project: A Europe-wide response mechanism for violations of press and media freedom
- Action 2 - Preparatory Action: Cross-border investigative journalism fund
- Action 3 - Pilot Project: Supporting investigative journalism and media freedom in the EU

The selected projects will be expected to ensure inter-project coordination and to regularly exchange information on their activities.

Legal Basis

Pilot projects within the meaning of Article 58(2)(a) and Preparatory action within the meaning of Article 58(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1).

The annual work programme was adopted under Commission Decision **C(2020)2259** of 20.4.2020.

2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES – ACTIVITIES – PRIORITIES OF EACH ACTION

2.1. Action 1 - Pilot Project: A Europe-wide response mechanism for violations of press and media freedom

The call for proposals aims at selecting one consortium to carry out Action 1.

2.1.1. Objectives

The Europe-wide rapid response mechanism for violations of press and media freedom is meant to mitigate the consequences of the deterioration of press and media freedom in certain Member States and Candidate Countries. It will also provide a systematic monitoring of violations of press and media freedom across the European Union. This mechanism will make violations visible and provide legal and practical support to journalists under threat. It will be carried out in collaboration with European, regional and local stakeholders in the field of media freedom.

2.1.2. Expected outputs

This action is expected to support the activities of one consortium of organisations working together to uphold media freedom and safety of journalists in the EU and Candidate Countries.

Practical help shall encompass concrete tools to protect journalists under threat, such as providing advice and legal support as well as offering shelter and logistical assistance thereby enabling the targeted journalists to continue pursuing their professional activities. This can include financial support when needed.

Representatives of the consortium shall visit the countries affected, if the sanitary situation allows it. The project will also organise remote visits when best suited. Anti-impunity action shall be supported through advocacy. The tools used will be adjusted to accommodate individual needs on a case-by-case basis.

Violations of press and media freedom will be systematically and comprehensively monitored across the EU in order to ensure the provision of reliable and comprehensive information on such violations to the general public as well as to the European institutions. The monitoring should be geared to ensure early warnings about violations. The members of the consortium will systematically publish the alerts related to EU and Candidate Countries on a dedicated website, building on the Mapping Media Freedom Platform¹. They will also publish regular reports listing all alerts and identifying main trends.

2.1.3. *Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals*

a) Design and manage a Europe-wide rapid response mechanism to support media freedom and journalists' safety, covering all EU Member States. Coverage of Candidate Countries will be considered an advantage.

The mechanism shall be designed in such a way as to ensure rapid reaction to situations where journalists are under threat and/or media freedom is endangered. The applicants shall describe the type, scope and size of the mechanism they intend to establish. They will also describe the various partners they intend to work with and how the partners will collaborate.

b) Provide legal and practical support to journalists and other media practitioners in need.

The project shall provide legal and practical support to journalists and other media practitioners in need. The applicants shall describe the resources they intend to mobilise to that effect, the practical means (such as shelter or financial support or support regarding digital safety issues) as well as the expected total number of individuals they will be able to support at any one time as well as on a monthly basis. The project shall establish contacts with local/national entities offering practical and legal support to media actors with a view to build a cooperation network.

c) Organise advocacy missions to locations where journalists are under threat.

The project shall have the capacity to organise several advocacy missions during the course of the project. The project will also organise remote visits when best suited. The applicants shall provide an indicative list of the advocacy missions they intend to conduct and shall describe how they would organise them, taking account of possible travel restrictions and sanitary measures. The project shall also be able to rapidly establish additional missions, should urgent situations emerge. The applicants shall

¹ <https://www.mappingmediafreedom.org/>

describe the type of collaboration with partners and other stakeholders they would seek to establish for the purpose of advocacy missions.

d) Monitor the state of media freedom in the EU Member States and Candidate Countries.

The project shall monitor the state of media freedom and record threats and alerts in the EU Member States and Candidate Countries. This activity will build on the experience of the Mapping Media Freedom project². The applicants shall describe the methodology they intend to use to ensure a systematic and comprehensive gathering of alerts in all EU Member States and Candidate Countries. They shall also explain how they intend to verify and publish the information gathered, including alerts submitted by citizens and NGOs. Comprehensive reports covering all alerts in the EU and Candidate Countries will be issued after six months and at the end of the grant. The project shall also publish regular statistical and in depth analysis on media freedom issues related to thematic or geographical areas. The results of this monitoring will be published online and the database will be made publically available. The applicants will describe the tools and the resource they intend to use for that purpose.

e) Organise awareness raising campaigns in the field of media freedom and safety of journalists

The applicants shall describe the type and number of awareness raising campaigns they intend to organise.

f) Ensure communication and dissemination activities.

Communication and dissemination activities are essential for this project. The applicants shall describe their planned activities (conferences, publications, websites, social media activities, etc.), and indicate the expected deliverables and the resources they intend to devote to this part of the project.

g) Monitor and evaluate the action.

All the activities of the project shall be monitored and evaluated in terms of efficiency and impact. A specific evaluation report shall be submitted on completion of the project.

2.2. Action 2 - Preparatory Action: Cross-border Investigative journalism fund

The call for proposals aims at selecting one consortium to carry out Action 2

2.2.1 Objectives

It is a challenge to sustain quality journalism and especially (resource-intensive) investigative journalism in the current fast-evolving media landscape. The preparatory action will contribute to ensuring such sustainability. The action will fund grants supporting journalistic investigations involving journalists from at

² <https://www.mappingmediafreedom.org/>

least two Member States, thereby highlighting issues of common interest to citizen of several Member States and strengthening the European media sphere. This preparatory action will build on the ‘European research grants for journalistic investigations, #IJ4EU’ project³.

2.2.2 Expected outputs

A series of research grants for journalistic investigations with a cross-border dimension will be established. An independent body will be set up to implement consecutive rounds of grants supporting journalistic investigations involving journalists from at least two Member States, with the possible addition of Candidate Countries. The award of grants shall take into account the need to ensure independent investigations and journalistic freedom. Results of investigations will be published in at least the Member States involved.

2.2.3 Description of the activities to be funded under Action 2 of the call for proposals

a) Design and implement a cross-border investigative funding scheme, including the establishment of an independent jury which shall evaluate and select journalistic projects.

The applicants will describe the funding scheme(s) they intend to set up and the related financial resources that would be deployed. Particular attention should be given to ensuring the editorial independence of the journalists being funded by the project.

b) Selection of grantees ensuring a geographical and thematic balance.

The applicants shall explain how they intend to cooperate with the jury and what criteria will be used to select the grantees. This Preparatory Action should cover the entire European Union, with possible additional participation of grantees from Candidate Countries alongside grantees from at least two Member States, and a wide variety of topics, with a particular emphasis on topics having a strong cross-border dimension. When launching their calls for grant applications, the applicants are invited to specify whether / to what extent particular areas of investigation or specific geographical areas will be targeted.

c) Provide practical support and training to the journalists involved in the funding scheme

The Preparatory Action shall provide training and support to the selected grantees involved in the funding scheme if/when requested and relevant. The applicants will describe the type of training and support they intend to provide and how and/or with whom they will organise it. The Action will cover the accommodation/travel costs of the grantees participating in such training sessions as well as technical means in case of online sessions. When needed, the action will provide legal or practical support to the grantees. The applicants will describe how they plan to provide such support.

The total amount devoted to this task should not exceed 10% of the total budget of the project.

³ <https://www.investigativejournalismforeu.net/>

d) Disburse funds and ensure sound financial management

The applicants will describe the way they will fund the selected projects. They will detail the modalities of payment they intend to apply (breakdown, timing, etc.). No co-funding from the grantees (i.e. the journalists or the media outlets) shall be required.

e) Ensure dissemination of results and communication with the grantees

The applicants shall describe how they will ensure that each investigative story to be funded is published/broadcast as widely as possible. Such stories should be published/broadcast in at least the Member States where the participating journalists work. In addition, a website dedicated to the action shall be set up, where, at a minimum, titles of and links to the publications will be made available. The action will also ensure dissemination of its results via social media. The applicants will describe in detail their dissemination strategy (public events, websites, brochures, videos, press releases, social media, etc.) and how they will ensure liaison with the grantees.

f) Monitor and evaluate the action

All the activities of the project shall be monitored and evaluated in terms of efficiency and impact. A specific evaluation report shall be submitted on completion of the project.

2.3. Action 3 - Pilot Project: Supporting investigative journalism and media freedom in the EU

The call for proposals aims at selecting one consortium to carry out Action 3.

2.3.1 Objectives

Activities to be conducted under Action 3 will be geared at providing support to independent, collaborative journalism in the EU Member States and at promoting media freedom and media diversity across the EU. The action will also help raising awareness on the importance of media freedom and quality and ethical journalism for democracy. The action should facilitate building a community of media professionals and organisations that are active in the field.

2.3.2 Expected outputs

This action is expected to fund the activities to be carried out by one consortium of at least three organisations. Overall the action will provide financial and practical support to stimulate quality journalism and media freedom / diversity in the EU. The outputs will comprise, in particular: support to collaborative journalism; helping journalists and news media to exchange good practices; helping journalists and news media to use innovative tools and resources in order to improve the quality of their output; setting up cooperation with peers; promoting ethical codes and professional standards.

2.3.3 Description of the activities to be funded under Action 3 of the call for proposals

Overall, the different parts of the project should envisage activities in ten or more EU Member States. Applicants shall explain why the proposed activities are of relevance to the media community in the targeted countries.

Activities to be covered by the project include the following:

a) Organise training for investigative journalists and other media actors

This part of the project shall include the organisation of training sessions for groups of journalists and groups of managers from recently established or small independent media. In addition, distance learning can be envisaged, especially in view of possible travel restrictions and sanitary situations. Applicants are expected to describe the type and number / duration of training sessions they intend to organise, the specific target groups and the estimated number of participants, as well as the main topics they would cover during the training sessions. Safety of journalists, collaborative tools, monetising and publishing tools as well as digital security are particularly encouraged as topics. Particular attention should be given to new/emerging (digital) media outlets and journalists working in countries where investigative and collaborative journalism is less developed or where the training offer is deemed insufficient. The project should cover the trainers' fees, their travel and accommodation expenses as well as those of the participants and include costs of technical means, including for remote sessions.

b) Support innovation in small and emerging media

This part of the project shall provide practical and/or financial support to small/emerging media outlets to help them acquire and master innovative tools/standards/methods/techniques, especially in the area of investigative and collaborative journalism.

Applicants are invited to describe the scope, extent and components of such support, e.g. the particular innovations they would prioritise, the number of small/emerging media outlets that will be supported, concrete means of support, etc. They shall also describe the way they intend to select the media outlets they intend to support and how they will ensure the independence of the selected outlets.

c) Support collaboration between small and emerging media outlets

This part of the project shall provide practical and/or financial support to small/emerging media outlets with a view to develop collaborative journalistic projects between two or more media outlets.

Activities such as content sharing, co-creation and translation of journalistic pieces of general interest are particularly encouraged.

The applicants shall describe the criteria and procedures they intend to use to select the media outlets they intend to support and how they will make sure to fully respect their editorial independence. Particular attention should be given to local media outlets that are active in countries where collaborative or innovative journalism is less developed. Collaborative projects can take place at national,

regional or EU level. Applicants shall indicate the types and the number projects they intend to select and shall explain how they plan to disburse the funds.

d) Promote ethical codes and professional standards

The activities of this part of the project will focus on stimulating awareness and understanding of journalistic ethical codes and professional standards within the profession and the general public in the European Union. The coverage of Candidate Countries will be considered an advantage. The project will be expected to engage with media actors and the public at large. Applicants will describe the proposed measures (including the types and the number) as well as the envisaged geographical coverage.

For Action 3, applicants must cover at least three of the activities described above.

All activities under this project should avoid duplication of the activities described in Actions 1 and 2.

The projects to be funded under Action 1, 2 and 3 are expected to ensure communication and dissemination of their activities. Applicants shall describe how they will disseminate the results of their activities (websites, social media, webinars, podcasts, brochures, etc.) and how they will ensure coordination with entities selected to carry out other activities across Actions under this Call.

Applicants should envisage attending one or two coordination meetings in Brussels, should the sanitary situation allow travelling. Otherwise, virtual meetings will be organised.

All projects are expected to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their activities in terms of efficiency and impact. Specific evaluation reports shall be submitted on completion of the projects.

3. TIMETABLE

The indicative schedule for the different steps and stages of the selection procedure are as follows:

	Steps	Date and time or indicative period
(a)	Publication of the call	<i>20 November 2020</i>
(b)	Deadline for submitting applications	<i>20 January 2021</i>
(c)	Evaluation period	<i>Q1 2021</i>
(d)	Information to applicants	<i>Q1, 2021</i>
(e)	Signature of grant agreements	<i>Q1/Q2, 2021</i>
(f)	Start date of the projects	<i>Action 1: Q2, 2021</i> <i>Action 2: Q2, 2021</i>

The proposed maximum duration of the projects is 12 months.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of the projects under this call for proposals is estimated at 3.880.119 EUR (three million eight hundred eighty thousand one hundred nineteen euros). The breakdown per Action is as follows:

Action 1: **1.380 119 EUR (one million three hundred eighty thousand one hundred nineteen euros)**

Action 2: **1.500.000 EUR (one million five hundred thousand euros)**

Action 3: **1.000.000 EUR (one million euros)**

The EU co-financing is limited to a *maximum co-funding rate of 90% of the total eligible costs*.

The Commission expects to fund 1 proposal for Action 1. The maximum grant under Action 1 will be 1.380.119 EUR.

The Commission expects to fund 1 proposal for Action 2. The maximum grant under Action 2 will be 1.500.000 EUR.

The Commission expects to fund 1 proposal for Action 3. The maximum grant under Action 3 will be 1.000.000 EUR.

The Commission reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. ADMISSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to be admissible, applications must be:

- sent no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;
- submitted in writing and in electronic form (pdf) (see section 14), using the application form available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/news-redirect/687106> ; and
- drafted in one of the EU official languages⁴.

Failure to comply with those requirements will lead to rejection of the application.

⁴ In order to speed the evaluation process and the award of funds, proposals must be drafted preferably in English.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants are requested to select and identify clearly the Action(s) for which they are submitting a proposal.

Applicants may submit a proposal for one or more of the Actions, but a separate proposal must be submitted for each Action.

For Actions 1 and 2, each proposal must cover all the activities of the respective action. Bidding for only part of the activities under these actions will lead to the exclusion of the proposal.

For Action 3, applicants can submit a proposal for a project covering minimum three of the activities described under 2.3.3.

6.1. Eligible applicants

The call is open to:

- Groupings of entities (consortia) – with the entities forming this consortia having or not entities affiliated to them

For projects under all three actions, proposals may be submitted by any of the following applicants or combinations of:

- non-profit organisation (private or public);
- international organisations;
- universities;
- educational institutions;
- research centres.

Natural persons are not eligible except if:

- they are self-employed persons or equivalent (i.e. sole traders) where the company does not possess legal personality separate from that of the natural person.
- they are part of a consortium. However, projects cannot be coordinated by a natural person

General notice for UK applicants: Please be aware that following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement⁵ on 1 February 2020 and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the European Union are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in the United Kingdom. UK residents and entities are therefore eligible to participate under this call.

Affiliated entities

⁵ Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.

Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action as affiliated entities⁶, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 11.2.

For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the application form.

Country of establishment – for Actions 1, 2 and 3

Only applications from legal entities established in the following countries are eligible:

- EU Member States;
- EFTA and EEA countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland. Applications from legal entities established in EFTA and EEA countries are eligible as part of a consortium but the projects cannot be coordinated by an entity established in an EFTA or EEA country.
- Candidate Countries
Applications from legal entities established in Candidate Countries are eligible as part of a consortium but the projects cannot be coordinated by an entity established in a candidate country.

– **Consortium requirements – for Actions 1 and 2**

In order to be eligible, a proposal must be submitted by a consortium composed of at least *two* legal entities.

Consortium requirements for Action 3

In order to be eligible, a proposal must be submitted by a consortium composed of at least *three* legal entities.

Supporting documents

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **private entity:** extract from the official journal, copy of articles of association, extract of trade or association register, certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required);
- **public entity:** copy of the resolution, decision or other official document establishing the public-law entity ;
- **natural persons:** photocopy of identity card and/or passport; certificate of liability to VAT, if applicable (e.g. some self-employed persons)
- **entities without legal personality:** documents providing evidence that their representative(s) have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf.

⁶ In accordance with Article 187 FR, entities that satisfy the eligibility criteria and that do not fall within one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141(1) FR and that have a link with the applicant, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, will be considered as entities affiliated to the applicant.

6.2. Eligible activities

The following types of activities are eligible under **Action 1** of this call for proposals:

- cooperation projects;
- conferences, seminars;
- training activities;
- awareness and dissemination actions;
- actions aiming at the creation and improvement of networks, exchanges of good practices;
- actions aiming at the creation and improvement of digital tools;
- studies, analyses, mapping projects;
- legal and practical support to journalists;
- advocacy missions;
- financial support to third parties (see point 11.8. d)).

The following types of activities are eligible under **Action 2** of this call for proposals:

- conferences, seminars;
- training activities;
- awareness and dissemination actions;
- advocacy missions;
- legal and practical support to journalists;
- financial support to third parties (see point 11.8. d)).

The following types of activities are eligible under **Action 3** of this call for proposals:

- cooperation projects;
- conferences, seminars;
- training activities;
- awareness and dissemination actions;
- actions aiming at the creation and improvement of networks, exchanges of good practices;
- actions aiming at the creation and improvement of digital tools;
- studies, analyses, mapping projects;
- advocacy missions.
- financial support to third parties (see point 11.8. d)).

Implementation period – for Actions 1, 2 and 3

The proposed maximum duration of the projects is 12 months.

7. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

7.1. Exclusion

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;
 - (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Commission during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:
 - (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;

- (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;
 - (vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;
 - (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
 - (g) It has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
 - (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);
 - (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
 - (i) facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - (ii) non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - (iii) facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - (iv) information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - (v) decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - (vi) decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

7.2. Remedial measures

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed above (see section 7.1), it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be

provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (d) of section 7.1.

7.3. Rejection from the call for proposals

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- (a) is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with section 7.1; or
- (b) has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or
- (c) was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

The same exclusion criteria apply to affiliated entities.

Administrative sanctions (exclusion) may be imposed on applicants, or affiliated entities where applicable, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

7.4. Supporting documents

Applicants and affiliated entities must provide an original “blue ink” signed⁷ declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141 FR, by filling in the relevant form attached to the application form accompanying the call for proposals and available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/news-redirect/687106> .

This obligation may be fulfilled in one of the following ways (*All Actions*):

- (i) the coordinator of a consortium signs a declaration on behalf of all applicants and their affiliated entities; OR
- (ii) each applicant in the consortium signs a declaration in its name and on behalf of its affiliated entities; OR
- (iii) each applicant in the consortium and the affiliated entities each sign a separate declaration in their own name.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

8.1. Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding.

The verification of the financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies, including Member States organisations and to International Organisations.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the below thresholds apply to each applicant.

⁷ A hand-written “blue ink” signature is mandatory (electronic signature conform to eIDAS regulation will however be accepted) While scans suffice before the deadline of proposals, the original blue ink versions must be provided before any grant agreement can be signed by the Commission.

The financial capacity of a single applicant or coordinator will always be assessed based on documents to be provided under point 8.1 b).

The individual applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the following supporting documents to be submitted with the application:

- a) Low value grants (\leq EUR 60 000):
 - a declaration on their honour.
- b) Grants $>$ EUR 60 000:
 - a declaration on their honour

AND

- the profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last 2 (two) financial years for which the accounts were closed;
 - for newly created entities: the business plan might replace the above documents;
 - the table with the financial figures provided for in Annex to the application form (BS and P&L Financial Capacity Check table), filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures.
- c) Grants for an action $>$ EUR 750 000:
 - (i) the information and supporting documents mentioned in point b) above, and
 - (ii) **an audit report** produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last 2 (two) years available, where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.

If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant's authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last 2 (two) financial years available must be provided.

On the basis of the documents submitted, if the Authorised Representative Officer of the Commission considers that financial capacity is weak, s/he may:

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing;
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see section 11.7.2 below);
- where applicable, require the joint and several financial liability of all the co-beneficiaries.

If the Authorised Representative Officer of the Commission considers that the financial capacity is insufficient s/he will reject the application.

8.2. Operational capacity

Applicants must have the professional competencies as well as appropriate qualifications necessary to complete the proposed action. The applicants must demonstrate/have proven knowledge and/or previous activity in the fields of: journalism or media freedom.

In this respect, applicants have to submit a declaration on their honour, and the following supporting documents:

- curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the people primarily responsible for managing and implementing the operation (accompanied where appropriate, like in the field of research and education, by a list of relevant publications);
- the organisation's activity reports;
- an exhaustive lists of previous projects and activities performed and connected to the policy field of media freedom and journalism or to the actions to be carried out.

In the event of an application grouping several applicants (consortium), the above requirements shall apply to the combined capacity of all members of the consortium. Combined capacity means that individually, each member of the consortium should comply with the criteria corresponding to its task in the project.

9. AWARD CRITERIA

Eligible applications/projects will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

<u>Award criterion</u>	<u>Maximum score</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
The relevance of the project and the contribution of its expected results to the objectives of the call	20	10
The effectiveness and rationale of the proposed methodology and organisation (including the timetable and monitoring)	20	10
Geographical coverage (coverage of as many Member States as possible) (for Actions 1 and 2) or Diversity (inclusion of new/emerging media outlets, local journalists or journalists working in countries where investigative/collaborative journalism is less developed or is at risk) (for Action 3)	20	10
The impact and dissemination of the expected results	20	10
Cost effectiveness of the proposed action, in particular the relevance and quality of the means of implementation and the resources deployed in relation to the objectives envisaged	20	10
TOTAL	100	60

Minimum score per criterion (threshold): Proposals scoring less than **50%** of the maximum score for any award criterion will be considered of insufficient quality and rejected.

Minimum total score (threshold): Proposals with a total score of less than **60 points** at the end of the evaluation process will be considered of insufficient quality and rejected.

10. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

In the event of a grant awarded by the Commission, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the applicant, as well as the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties.

Two copies of the original agreement must be signed first by the legal representative⁸ (person authorised to sign the agreement) of the coordinator on behalf of the consortium and returned to the Commission immediately. The Commission will sign it last.

The applicants understand that submission of a grant application implies acceptance of the general conditions attached to this call for proposals in Annex II to the model grant agreement. These general conditions bind the beneficiaries to whom the grant is awarded and shall constitute an annex to the grant agreement.

11. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

11.1. Form of the grant

11.1.1 Reimbursement of costs actually incurred

The grant will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of **90%** to the eligible costs actually incurred and declared by the beneficiary and its affiliated entities.

Eligible costs must be declared under the following forms ('forms of costs'):

- (a) for direct personnel costs: as actually incurred costs ('actual costs'),
- (b) for direct costs of subcontracting: as actually incurred costs (actual costs);
- (c) for direct costs of providing financial support to third parties: as actually incurred costs (actual costs).
- (d) for other direct costs: as actually incurred costs (actual costs);
- (e) for indirect costs: on the basis of a flat-rate applied (maximum 7% of the eligible direct costs, excluding direct costs of subcontracting, and direct costs of financial support to third parties).

For details on eligibility of costs, please refer to section 11.2.

⁸ The Commission reserves the right to ask the proof of appointment

11.2. Eligible costs⁹

Eligible costs shall meet all the following criteria:

- they are incurred by the beneficiary.
- they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;
 - The period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement.
 - If a beneficiary can demonstrate the need to start the action before the agreement is signed, the costs eligibility period may start before that signature. Under no circumstances can the eligibility period start before the date of submission of the grant application.
- they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

The same criteria apply to costs incurred by the affiliated entities.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

11.2.1. Eligible direct costs¹⁰

The eligible direct costs for the action are the costs which:

with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as :

- (a) *the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration.*

Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration. They may also comprise additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a

⁹ Article II.19.1 of the Model Grant Agreement

¹⁰ Article II.19.2 of the Model Grant Agreement

consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to the beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- (i) the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);*
- (ii) the result of the work belongs to the beneficiary (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise); and*
- (iii) the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary;*

The recommended methods for the calculation of direct personnel costs are provided in Appendix.

- (b) costs for the work of volunteers up to the limit of 50 % of the overall Union and other co-financing of the action; - NOT APPLICABLE*
- (c) costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;*
- (d) the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, provided that the asset:
 - (i) is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices; and*
 - (ii) has been purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement, if the purchase occurred within the implementation period;**

The costs of renting or leasing equipment or other assets are also eligible, provided that these costs do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment or assets and are exclusive of any finance fee;

Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account when determining the eligible costs. By way of exception, the full cost of purchase of equipment may be eligible under the Special Conditions, if this is justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;

- (e) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:
 - (i) are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement; and*
 - (ii) are directly assigned to the action;**

- (f) *costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement;*
- (g) *costs derived from subcontracts, provided that specific conditions on subcontracting as laid down in the grant agreement are met¹¹;*
- (h) *costs of financial support to third parties, provided that the conditions laid down in the grant agreement are met¹²; (see section 11.8.d)*
- (i) *duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT), provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the grant agreement.*

11.2.2. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)¹³

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

A flat-rate amount of maximum 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action, excluding direct costs of subcontracting and direct costs of financial support to third parties, is eligible as indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that if they are receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget, they may not declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

In order to demonstrate this, in principle, the beneficiary should:

- a. use *analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads)* attributable to the operating grant and the action grant. For that purpose the beneficiary should use *reliable accounting codes and allocation keys* ensuring that *the allocation* of the costs is done in a *fair, objective and realistic way*.
- b. *record separately*:
 - all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and

¹¹ Article II.11 of the Model Grant Agreement

¹² Article II.12 of the Model Grant Agreement

¹³ Article II.19.3 of the Model Grant Agreement

- all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action)

If the operating grant covers the entire usual annual activity and budget of the beneficiary, the latter is not entitled to receive any indirect costs under the action grant.

11.3. Ineligible costs¹⁴

The following items are not considered as eligible costs:

- a) return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary;
- b) debt and debt service charges;
- c) provisions for losses or debts;
- d) interest owed;
- e) doubtful debts;
- f) exchange losses;
- g) costs of transfers from the Commission charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- h) costs declared by the beneficiary under another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget. Such grants include grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Commission for the purpose of implementing the Union budget. In particular, beneficiaries receiving an operating grant financed by the EU or Euratom budget cannot declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.
- i) contributions in kind from third parties;
- j) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- k) deductible VAT.

11.4. Eligible costs that may be covered by the single lump sum

NOT APPLICABLE

11.5. Balanced budget

The estimated budget of the action must be attached to the application form. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants for whom costs will not be incurred in euros should use the exchange rate published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The applicant must ensure that the resources which are necessary to carry out the action are not entirely provided by the EU grant.

Co-financing of the action may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources,
- income generated by the action,

¹⁴ Article II.19.4 of the Model Grant Agreement

- financial contributions from third parties.

11.6. Calculation of the final grant amount¹⁵

The final amount of the grant is calculated by the Commission at the time of the payment of the balance. The calculation involves the following steps:

Step 1 — Application of the reimbursement rate to the eligible costs

The amount under step 1 is obtained by applying the reimbursement rate specified in section 11.1.1 to the eligible costs actually incurred and accepted by the Commission.

Step 2 — Limit to the maximum amount of the grant

The total amount paid to the beneficiaries by the Commission may in no circumstances exceed the maximum amount of the grant as indicated in the grant agreement. If the amount obtained following Step 1 is higher than this maximum amount, the final amount of the grant is limited to the latter.

Step 3 — Reduction due to the no-profit rule

‘Profit’ means the surplus of receipts over the total eligible costs of the action, where receipts are the amount obtained following Steps 1 and 2 plus the revenue generated by the action for beneficiaries and affiliated entities other than non-profit organisations.

In-kind and financial contributions by third parties are not considered receipts.

The total eligible costs of the action are the consolidated total eligible costs approved by the Commission. The revenue generated by the action is the consolidated revenue established, generated or confirmed for beneficiaries and affiliated entities other than non-profit organisations on the date on which the request for payment of the balance is drawn up.

If there is a profit, it will be deducted in proportion to the final rate of reimbursement of the actual eligible costs of the action approved by the Commission.

Step 4 — Reduction due to improper implementation or breach of other obligations

The Commission may reduce the maximum amount of the grant if the action has not been implemented properly (i.e. if it has not been implemented or has been implemented poorly, partially or late), or if another obligation under the Agreement has been breached.

The amount of the reduction will be proportionate to the degree to which the action has been implemented improperly or to the seriousness of the breach.

11.7. Reporting and payment arrangements

11.7.1 Payment arrangements

¹⁵ Article II.25 of the Model Grant Agreement

The beneficiary may request the following payments provided that the conditions of the grant agreement are fulfilled (e.g. payment deadlines, ceilings, etc.). The payment requests shall be accompanied by the documents provided below and detailed in the grant agreement:

Payment request	Accompanying documents
A pre-financing payment corresponding to 40% of the maximum grant amount	[financial guarantee (see section 11.7.2)] ¹⁶
<p>One interim payment:</p> <p>For the purpose of determining the amount due as interim payment, the reimbursement rate to be applied to the eligible costs approved by the Commission shall be 90%.</p> <p>The total amount of pre-financing and interim payment shall not exceed 80% of the maximum grant amount.</p>	<p>(a) interim technical report (b) interim financial statement (c) [a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts]¹⁷</p>
<p>Payment of the balance</p> <p>The Commission will establish the amount of this payment on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see section 11.6 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the Commission through a recovery order.</p>	<p>(a) final technical report (b) final financial statement (c) summary financial statement aggregating the financial statements already submitted previously and indicating the receipts (d) [a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts]¹⁸</p>

In case of a weak financial capacity of a beneficiary, section 8.1 above applies.

11.7.2 Pre-financing guarantee

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. When the beneficiary is established in a third country, the Commission may agree that a bank or financial institution established in that third country may provide the guarantee if it considers that

¹⁶ The decision on the request of a financial guarantee will be taken by the Authorised Representative Officer of the Commission in line with the financial capacity assessment (section 8.1)

¹⁷ The decision on the request for certificates on the financial statements and the threshold will be taken by the Authorised Representative Officer of the Commission during the evaluation of the proposal.

¹⁸ The decision on the request for certificates on the financial statements and the threshold will be taken by the Authorised Representative Officer of the Commission during the evaluation of the proposal.

the bank or financial institution offers equivalent security and characteristics as those offered by a bank or financial institution established in a Member State. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by:

- a joint and several guarantee by a third party or,
- a joint guarantee of the beneficiaries of an action who are parties to the same grant agreement.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or the payment of the balance, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

As an alternative to requesting a guarantee on pre-financing, the Commission may decide to split the payment of pre-financing into several instalments.

11.8. Other financial conditions

a) Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant from the EU budget.

Under no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate in the grant application the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its (the applicant's) functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.

b) Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed.

In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.

c) Implementation contracts/subcontracting¹⁹

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary may award the contract in accordance with its usual purchasing practices provided that the contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest.

The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation in the event of an audit.

¹⁹ Articles II.10 and II.11 of the Model Grant Agreement

Entities acting in their capacity as contracting authorities within the meaning of Directive 2014/24/EU²⁰ or contracting entities within the meaning of Directive 2014/25/EU²¹ must comply with the applicable national public procurement rules.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- a) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
- b) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- c) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
- d) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Commission. The Commission may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
- e) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.

d) Financial support to third parties²²

The applications may envisage provision of financial support to third parties. In such case the applications must include:

- an exhaustive list of the types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support out of the following fixed list:

For Action 1:

- Direct support to journalists facing threats (security or legal expenses);
- Ad hoc support to NGOs active in the field of media freedom and safety of journalism.

For Action 2:

²⁰ Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 65-242)

²¹ Directive 2014/25/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors and repealing Directive 2004/17/EC (OJ L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 243-374)

²² Article II.12 of the Model Grant Agreement

- Funding of cross-border investigative journalism (grants to journalists and media outlets);
- Support to the acquisition or development of technical tools in the area of investigative journalism;
- Support to events on media freedom and/or investigative journalism related topics;
- Support to the journalists/media outlets benefiting from the funding scheme if legal/practical support is needed because of threats;
- Support to journalists to attend trainings or events.

For Action 3:

- Support to the acquisition or development of technical tools in the area of investigative and collaborative journalism;
- Supporting collaborative journalism (grants to media outlets);
- Support to journalists to attend trainings or events;
- Supporting the organisation of training activities;
- Support the functioning of tools or platforms for collaborative journalism;
- Support to events aiming at promoting media freedom and quality journalism.

- the definition of the persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support out of the following categories:

For Action 1:

- Journalists and media practitioners (natural persons);
- NGOs.

For Action 2:

- Journalists and media practitioners (natural persons);
- Media outlets;
- NGOs.

For Action 3:

- Journalists and media practitioners (natural persons);
- Media outlets;
- NGOs.

- the criteria for awarding financial support
- the maximum amount to be granted to each third party and the criteria for determining it.

For Actions 1, 2 and 3: The amount of financial support per third party must not exceed 50.000 EUR (fifty thousand euros).

12. PUBLICITY

12.1. By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

In this respect, beneficiaries are required to give prominence to the name and emblem of the European Commission on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised under the co-financed project.

To do this they must use the text, the emblem and the disclaimer available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/resources-partners/european-commission-visual-identity_en .

If this requirement is not fully complied with, the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

Beneficiaries will seek approval of the Commission in case they intend to add the logo or references to other sponsors next to the Commission's ones.

The EU is not responsible for the views displayed in the publications and/or in conjunction with the activities for which the grant is used.

12.2. By the Commission

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The Commission will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary when the latter is a legal person, region when the beneficiary is a natural person, as defined on NUTS 2 level²³ if he/she is domiciled within the EU or equivalent if domiciled outside the EU;
- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

13. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

If processing your reply to the call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as your name, address and CV), such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC.

²³ Commission Regulation (EC) No 105/2007 of 1 February 2007 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), OJ L39, 10.2.2007, p.1.

Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate your application in accordance with the call for proposals and will be processed solely for that purpose by Ms Anna Herold, Head of Unit, Unit I.1 – Audiovisual and Media Services Policy, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology.

Details concerning the processing of your personal data are available on the privacy statement at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en.

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046²⁴. For more information, see the Privacy Statement for the database of the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) at : http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/explained/management/protecting/privacy_statement_e_des_en.pdf

14. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted **by the deadline set out under section 3.**

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the Commission may contact the applicant during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

The mandatory Grant Application Form and other mandatory template documents to be completed are available at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/news-redirect/687106>.

Applications **must** be submitted in the correct form, following the guidelines as outlined in section III.1 of the Grant Application Form, duly completed and dated. The application must be submitted in **one original paper copy** (no additional paper copies required) signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation.

Where applicable, additional information considered necessary by the applicant may be included as an annex (brochures, etc.), but assessment will be based on information included in the application form (therefore please limit the number and size of additional documents and attachments).

An electronic version (pdf) of the application form and all documents on USB stick must be provided together with the printed original requested. The electronic version (pdf) of the Grant Application Form must not be a scan of the paper version but must be searchable.

Applications **must** be sent to the following address:

²⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

European Commission
Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology
Directorate I – Unit I.1 – Audiovisual and Media Services Policy
For the attention of Ms Anna Herold
Reference: Call CNECT/2020/5558941 - < insert action ref. 1; 2 or 3 >
Head of Unit (BU25 05/181)
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

- **by registered post**²⁵ (evidence will be constituted by the deposit slip), or
- **by courier service** (evidence will be constituted by date of deposit slip), or
- **by hand-delivery**. It is compulsory for security reasons to address it **to the central mail department of the Commission** as follows:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology
Unit II – Audiovisual and Media Services Policy
Reference: Call CNECT/2020/5558941 - <insert action ref. 1; 2 or 3>
Avenue du Bourget, 1
B-1140 BRUSSELS (Evere),
Belgium

In this case, proof of submission of the proposal will take the form of a receipt signed and dated by the official of the Commission's central mail department who takes delivery of the documents. The department is open from 08.00 to 17.00 on Mondays to Thursdays and from 08.00 to 16.00 on Fridays. It is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Commission holidays.

In addition to the above:

- applicants **must** send an **e-mail** before the deadline set out under section 3 to the following email address: CNECT-II-CALLS@ec.europa.eu **to inform us about your submission on paper.**

Applications sent by fax or e-mail will not be accepted.

Please refer to the “Checklist” at the end of the Grant Application Form for the summary of documents to provide, format (searchable pdf, pdf scan, excel) and support (Original paper, copy or USB).

➤ **Contacts**

Questions and requests for clarification may be sent to: CNECT-II-CALLS@ec.europa.eu with a reference to the Call's title.

²⁵ Applicants are advised to keep the payment receipt with date and time from the post office in order to be able to prove that the proposal has been sent within the deadline

The Commission is not bound to reply to requests for additional information received less than six working days before the deadline for submitting applications set in section 3.

The answers will also be published in the Q-A section on: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/news-redirect/687106>

➤ **Annexes:**

- Grant application form and its annexes
 - Checklist of documents to be provided
 - Estimated budget form
 - Legal entity form
 - Bank account form
 - BS and P&L Financial Capacity Check table
- Model Declaration of honour
- Model grant agreement and its annexe II
 - (e-signed)
 - Roland BUEHRLE
 - Authorising Officer by sub-delegation
 - Directorate I

Appendix

Specific conditions for direct personnel costs

1. Calculation

The ways of calculating eligible direct personnel costs laid down in points (a) and (b) below are recommended and accepted as offering assurance as to the costs declared being actual.

The Commission may accept a different method of calculating personnel costs used by the beneficiary, if it considers that it offers an adequate level of assurance of the costs declared being actual.

a) for persons working exclusively on the action:

{ monthly rate for the person

multiplied by

number of actual months worked on the action }

The months declared for these persons may not be declared for any other EU or Euratom grant.

The **monthly rate** is calculated as follows:

{ annual personnel costs for the person

divided by 12 }

using the personnel costs for each full financial year covered by the reporting period concerned.

If a financial year is not closed at the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the monthly rate of the last closed financial year available;

b) for persons working part time on the action

(i) If the person is assigned to the action at a fixed pro-rata of their working time:

{ monthly rate for the person multiplied by pro-rata assigned to the action

multiplied by

number of actual months worked on the action }

The working time pro-rata declared for these persons may not be declared for any other EU or Euratom grant.

The monthly rate is calculated as above.

(ii) In other cases:

{hourly rate for the person multiplied by number of actual hours worked on the action}

or

{daily rate for the person multiplied by number of actual days worked on the action}

(rounded up or down to the nearest half-day)

The number of actual hours/days declared for a person must be identifiable and verifiable.

The total number of hours/days declared in EU or Euratom grants, for a person for a year, cannot be higher than the annual productive hours/days used for the calculations of the hourly/daily rate. Therefore, the maximum number of hours/days that can be declared for the grant are:

{number of annual productive hours/days for the year (see below)}

minus

total number of hours and days declared by the beneficiary, for that person for that year, for other EU or Euratom grants}.

The '**hourly/daily rate**' is calculated as follows:

{annual personnel costs for the person

divided by

number of individual annual productive hours/days} using the personnel costs and the number of annual productive hours/days for each full financial year covered by the reporting period concerned.

If a financial year is not closed at the end of the reporting period, the beneficiaries must use the hourly/daily rate of the last closed financial year available.

The 'number of individual annual productive hours/days' is the total actual hours/days worked by the person in the year. It may not include holidays and other absences (such as sick leave, maternity leave, special leave, etc). However, it may include overtime and time spent in meetings, trainings and other similar activities.

2. Documentation to support personnel costs declared as actual costs

For **persons working exclusively on the action**, where the direct personnel costs are calculated following **point (a)**, the beneficiaries must keep **time records** for the number of hours/days declared. The time records must be in writing and approved by the persons working on the action and their supervisors, at least monthly..

For **persons assigned to the action at a fixed pro-rata of their working time**, where the direct personnel costs are calculated following **point (b)(i)**, the beneficiaries must keep **time records** for the number of hours/days declared. The time records must be in writing and approved by the persons working on the action and their supervisors, at least monthly.

For **persons working part time on the action**, where direct personnel costs are calculated following **point (b)(ii)**, the beneficiaries must keep **time records** for the number of hours/days declared. The time records must be in writing and approved by the persons working on the action and their supervisors, at least monthly.

In the absence of reliable time records of the hours worked on the action, the Commission may accept alternative evidence supporting the number of hours/days declared, if it considers that it offers an adequate level of assurance.